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Writing Sample

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Includes "SHADOWS PASS US BY," "WHEN SOMEONE GOES AWAY EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN DONE COMES BACK," "MANY THINGS HAPPENED," "SOMEONE'S VOICE," "LIGHT AND DUST," "DAYS WHEN ONE SHOULD STAY ALONE," "FLYING," "PRESENCE," "NEW LANDS" and "WE REVEAL THE AGE."

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Nikola MADZIROV
Poems

SHADOWS PASS US BY

We'll meet one day,
like a paper boat and
a watermelon that's been cooling in the river.
The anxiety of the world will
be with us. Our palms
will eclipse the sun and we'll
approach each other holding lanterns.

One day, the wind won't
change direction.
The birch will send away leaves
into our shoes on the doorstep.
The wolves will come after
our innocence.
The butterflies will leave
their dust on our cheeks.

An old woman will tell stories
about us in the waiting room every morning.
Even what I'm saying has
been said already: we're waiting for the wind
like two flags on a border.

One day every shadow
will pass us by.

Translated from the Macedonian by Magdalena Horvat

WHEN SOMEONE GOES AWAY
EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN DONE COMES BACK

For Marjan K.

In the embrace on the corner you will recognize
someone's going away somewhere. It's always so.
I live between two truths
like a neon light trembling in
an empty hall. My heart collects
more and more people, since they're not here anymore.
It's always so. One fourth of our waking hours
is spent in blinking. We forget
things even before we lose them –
the calligraphy notebook, for instance.
Nothing's ever new. The bus
seat is always warm.
Last words are carried over
like oblique buckets to an ordinary summer fire.
The same will happen all over again tomorrow—
the face, before it vanishes from the photo,
will lose the wrinkles. When someone goes away
everything that's been done comes back.

Translated by Magdalena Horvat

MANY THINGS HAPPENED

Many things happened
while the Earth was spinning on
God's finger.

Wires released themselves
from pylons and now
they connect one love to another.
Ocean drops
deposited themselves eagerly
onto caves' walls.
Flowers separated
from minerals and set off
following the scent.

From the back pocket pieces of paper
started flying all over our airy room:
irrelevant things which we'd
never do unless
they're written down.

Translated by Magdalena Horvat

SOMEONE'S VOICE

Today is the day, today
an unknown saint is being celebrated.
Our child
will be named after him
and will say the prayers
that have no signature.

Today is the day when
someone's voice from the stained glass
will come back in many colours.

Even my cough is a call
after someone who's not here.

Today is the day when
childhood passes
imperceptibly as warm air
through a dreamer's lungs.

Translated by Magdalena Horvat

LIGHT AND DUST

In the space between
the four seasons I'll find you,
when children are taken out for a walk,
and souls come back
like dirty dishes in
a workers' canteen.

We are not a religion
and nobody believes in our
holy scriptures.

Our looks hide
in the curtains' folds
which let other people's prayers through
and the falling light.

Will our angels touch
when we hug each other
in the dark, will someone light a candle
to proclaim a kingdom?

We are the light of a burnt match
which turns to dust
when touched.

Translated by Magdalena Horvat and Adam Reed

DAYS WHEN ONE SHOULD STAY ALONE

It is true that the town
grew as a result of a lie
necessary for people,
flowerpots and tamed animals.

(that is how I provide myself with
the necessary justification)

It is true that all the people
get out of the buildings
(as during an earthquake)
and with a vase in their hands
head towards the meadows.

They return three times sadder
with dust on their palms
and a few murmurs
like holes in their memory.

Then
again common silence.

Translated from the Macedonian by Makedonka Bozhinovska

FLYING

The haze hangs over the city
like the Virgin Mary's bowed head
from a fresco far away.

Satellite dishes talk to
angels
trying to determine tomorrow's weather:
clear, safe, significant
like a calendar with
red dates.

But as soon as the night joins
the shadows to the wall,
you will sneak out towards the branches
like a rare bird
from the other side of a bank-note.

Translated by Magdalena Horvat

PRESENCE

Put on the night's space suit
and slice the apple in two
without harming its seeds.
Stand tall at the quiet bridge
and let your shadow float away.
Be alone, yet not lonely,
so that the sky can hold you.
Touch the insides of your wrists
above your head
like a crystal wineglass
and wait for the first raindrops,
after the pilotless planes
leave. Be a dream, a mezzanine,
the sesame at the bottom of a pack,
a deer sign on the road, an alphabet
known by two people only –
you and the one who doesn't believe you.
Look into the rearview mirror of
impermanence: your soft presence
grows more distant.

Translated by Magdalena Horvat and Adam Reed

NEW LANDS

One should scrape the wall
over which dampness has drawn
a map of the new world
and new separations should be applied.

Beneath them, the stones should be
rearranged haphazardly, like
the footprints of a man running from his fears.

One should be
a round mirror in an half-open palm
and reflect others' embraces
as sharp as scissor blades which touch each other
only when there's something to be cut.

New lands should be invented,
so one can walk on water once again.

Translated by Magdalena Horvat and Adam Reed

WE REVEAL THE AGE

We'll exist when they open the windows
and the secret documents. We carry off the dust
without a mention
of the dead and those they loved undyingly.
We always pack our pyjamas
at the bottom of the suitcase
and our shoes are never turned face to face.
We read our letters once
to preserve some secret.
With hands stretched out we reveal the age,
stay silent, silent, whisper things
that matter less than the interrupted dream
of a butterfly that lives but for a day.

Translated from the Macedonian by Peggy and Graham W. Reid
